



Appendix D.

Prehistory of Cultural Resources

PREHISTORY

Prehistory is usually divided into three parts: Paleo Indian Period, Developmental Period, and Ethnographic Period.

Paleo Indian Period (Initial Occupation – 7,500 Years Ago)

The first period is known as the Paleo Indian. It extends from initial human occupation to an arbitrary end at 7,500 years ago. Human occupation of the area probably began at least 12,000 years ago after the retreat of the ice age glaciers. The initial inhabitants may have entered the area by coming down the coast in small boats.

During this time, the climate was cooler and wetter than it is today. Although researchers have stressed a terrestrial orientation and the hunting of big game for Paleo Indian peoples, this orientation is probably due to differential preservation of hunting implements and large mammal bones, and an incomplete knowledge of settlement patterns, site variability and site survival.

A population oriented towards marine and riverine resources was present during this period, although archaeological evidence is rare in the state. Many of the oldest sites in the area are located along major rivers, usually at prime fishing spots that often continued to be used into historic times. Archaeological remains demonstrating this orientation are found at nine and ten thousand-year old sites in California, Oregon and British Columbia.

It is likely that people during this time had a subsistence strategy oriented towards the generalized collection of fish, shellfish, plants and other resources, with occasional massive protein inputs from the hunting of large mammals. Sites from this period on forested lands are likely to be special purpose and small resource extraction sites.

Developmental Period (7,500 – 4,500 Years Ago)

With postglacial environmental stabilization, more complex societies arose, oriented to the extremely rich riverine and marine shoreline zones of the state. People adapted to specific microenvironments in their territory, with procurement strategies and settlement patterns changing through time as resources fluctuated.

The period from 7,500 to 4,500 years ago was warmer and drier than present. In Eastern Washington, marginal areas were abandoned and subsistence and settlement concentrated

on major river systems. However, there probably were few changes in resource availability in Western Washington and there seems to be a strong, smooth continuity in resource orientation and settlement from the late Paleo Indian to ethnographically observed patterns. Many of the sites of this period show continued use into ethnographic or even historic times. A few coastal refuse (midden) sites date from this period. The oldest at Dupont is 5,200 years old. This is probably a function of continued sea level rise, rather than representative of relative use of the resource. Sites from this period on forested lands are likely to be special purpose and small to moderate size resource extraction sites.

Ethnographic Period (3,000 – 200 Years Ago)

By 3,000 years ago, the Northwest Coast ethnographic pattern was fully established, characterized by large semi-permanent winter villages at lower elevations, seasonal forays to resource extraction sites and seasonal camps often at higher elevations. Economic orientation was primarily towards marine and riverine resources, but there was considerable economic specialization relative to specific resources found in each groups' area. The people developed food processing and storage technologies and complex trade and travel networks from the Pacific Coast to the Columbia Plateau.

Western Washington is abundant with riverine and marine resources. Salmon and other migratory fish were a major source of food and the focus of ceremonial and social life. Local economies specialized in specific resources with fur seal, elk, deer and even mountain goat playing dominant roles. Wood was the main building and tool-making material and knowledge of the properties of many species was extensive and specialized. Cedar was used for large plank houses and canoes. Alder was used for bowls and spoons. Cedar bark and other species were used for clothing, baskets and other objects. The basic social group was the extended family that stayed together during seasonal migrations to resource procurement areas.

Eastern Washington has a more arid, continental climate and more sparsely scattered resources. People depended on salmon and root crops as major food sources, supplementing these with berries, nuts and small and large game. The basic social unit was the mobile band, which was well adapted to the hunting, fishing and gathering of more widely dispersed resources. Winter structures were typically pithouses, made by excavating pits in the earth and constructing roofs out of poles and mats covered with earth. Seasonal shelters were built from pole and animal skins or woven mats. The introduction of horses in the 1700s profoundly altered the economic and social organization of the groups by facilitating travel, trade and transport over much greater distances.

A common practice in both Eastern and Western Washington was the large-scale manipulation of the landscape. The use of fire as a major landscape modification tool has not been extensively studied, but is well known. Its main purpose was to promote growth of root crops and to support environments favorable for deer, elk and other large animals. The landscape that greeted the earliest European explorers was largely human-created rather than in its original natural state.

HISTORIC

The arrival of Euro-Americans in the late 18th century significantly altered the health, social organization and culture of the Native Americans. The earliest Euro-American permanent settlement of the area was by fur traders. The Hudson's Bay Company and other trading companies constructed trading establishments throughout Washington, often near major Native American settlements. American settlers coming into the Pacific Northwest tended to settle near these trading establishments where they often displaced the Native Americans.

Most major Native American settlements and all major early Euro-American settlements were on navigable water. This is because they were the main transportation corridors. Early historic economies were predominantly extractive: logging, mining, shellfish gathering and salmon fishing.

Most private agricultural development of the state began with the federal Donation Land Claim Act (1850), Homestead Acts (1862) and similar laws that provided free land to settlers and promoted a swarm of immigration to the Pacific Northwest. Trails and roads soon connected settlements and commercial centers, and small towns gradually arose to provide for settlers' needs. In 1887, the completion of the transcontinental Northern Pacific Railroad opened the state of Washington to trade with the east.

